



## Ethnic and Racial Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rers20>

### Racializing subversion: The FBI and the depiction of race in early Cold War movies

John Noakes<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA

Published online: 07 Dec 2010.

To cite this article: John Noakes (2003) Racializing subversion: The FBI and the depiction of race in early Cold War movies, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26:4, 728-749, DOI: [10.1080/0141987032000087389](https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987032000087389)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0141987032000087389>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

# Racializing subversion: The FBI and the depiction of race in early Cold War movies

John A. Noakes

## Abstract

During the 1940s, as part of its investigation of 'Communist Infiltration Into the Motion Picture Industry', the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI] borrowed criteria for determining if a motion picture contained communist propaganda from the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals [MPAPAI], a private, anti-communist organization located in Hollywood. An analysis of the FBI's interpretation of movies that featured black characters or explored racial themes reveals how the agency racialized its investigation of subversiveness in the early Cold War period. In the FBI's application of the MPAPAI criteria, blackness became synonymous with subversiveness and whiteness with Americanism. The FBI's racial project, as revealed in these reviews, is linked to its framing of the Communist threat and contrasted to the Truman administration's racial project and framing of the Communist threat

**Keywords:** Racial projects; the FBI; Hollywood; Communist threat; movies.

When Harry Truman assumed the presidency upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt, he found himself 'in the middle of a stream of events heralding a Second Reconstruction' (Sitkoff 1971, p. 598). Racial dynamics in the United States had been changed unalterably during World War II. Jim Crow maintained his firm grip on the South, but in the late 1940s federal officials threatened, for the first time since Reconstruction, to redistribute resources along racial lines in favour of blacks. National politicians, both Republicans and Democrats, competed for the support of blacks who, having migrated North for factory jobs during the war, realized their right to vote. Meanwhile, between 1944 and 1950, the United States Supreme Court chipped away at the edifice of segregation,

declaring unconstitutional all-white primaries, segregated seated on interstate bus trips, restrictive covenants, and racial separation in state colleges and universities (McAdam 1982, Kryder 2000 ).

The representations of blacks in civil society also began to change in the late 1940s (Sullivan 1996). In popular culture, for example, black athletes broke the color-line in the National Football League in 1946, and in major league baseball in 1947. At the local movie theater Hollywood movie studios began to feature positive, if still one-dimensional, portrayals of black characters in films such as *Body and Soul* (1947), *Pinky* (1949), and *Home of the Brave* (1949). The National Association of Colored People [NAACP] had been pressuring Hollywood since the early 1940s to abandon its stock depictions of blacks as 'clowns, heavies, moronic servants or as superstitious individuals scared of ghosts' (quoted in Vaughn 1992, p. 2). The more positive portrayal of black characters in Hollywood movies in the latter years of the decade represented a small but significant victory for the NAACP.

As with the first, however, federal officials lost the will to sustain the 'Second Reconstruction' in the face of significant opposition. While civil rights leaders and New Dealers celebrated the changing racial climate, others fought vehemently to maintain the racial status quo. Objecting to executive orders requiring 'equal treatment and opportunity' in the armed forces and barring employment discrimination in the federal government, and to a strong civil rights plank in 1948 party platform, Southern 'Dixiecrats' walked out of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia and rallied around South Carolina Governor J. Strom Thurmond as the States' Rights Party candidate for President. Thurmond ran on a platform of racial segregation, branding Truman's civil rights measures 'communistic' and 'un-American' (McCullough 1992; Levine 1996).

To the Truman administration, however, civil rights gains were an integral part of the struggle against communist expansion. The 'Truman Doctrine' promoted a liberal anticommunism that framed the Communist threat as primarily an international problem. American communists were considered despicable, but somewhat laughable and hardly dangerous. The real danger was in the expansionist plans of the Soviet Union in struggling Third World nations. Liberal anticommunists therefore urged an aggressive international campaign to advance the might and right of the United States. Racial inequality in the United States, however, threatened to undermine efforts to promote the virtues of Americanism, particularly in Third World nations. If we understand racial projects to be 'simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources among particular racial lines' (Omi and Winant 1994, p. 56), then the liberal racial project was part of a broader anticommunist agenda.

But there was no consensus in the federal government on the liberal understanding of the Communist threat, nor on the relationship between communism and the budding civil rights movement. Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI] Director J. Edgar Hoover, most notably, subscribed to a different interpretation of both the Communist threat and American racial dynamics. The countersubversive master frame favoured by Hoover and many conservatives considered the Communist threat as primarily a domestic issue. From this perspective, communists in the United States were part of a well-organized movement coordinated by Moscow that sought to capture the hearts and minds of marginal and vulnerable Americans. While considered generally content, blacks, immigrants, the working class, and other 'unsophisticated' populations were understood as having only a fragile commitment to American values and traditions and therefore as vulnerable to the seductive, if false promises of radicals (Powers 1995).

Hoover first linked black demands for racial progress to subversiveness during the 'Red Summer' of 1919. Mark Ellis (1994, p. 40) has argued that Hoover's investigations of the wave of black protests in the months following the end of World War I 'made such a deep impression ... that he retained throughout his long working life the views he formed about black activist' at that time. Then head of the Department of Justice's antiradical division, Hoover blamed the racial unrest on foreign subversion. In an internal memo, Hoover asserted that 'Reds have done a vast amount of evil damage by carrying doctrines of race revolt and the poison of Bolshevism to the Negroes' (quoted in O'Reilly 1989, p. 13; see also Williams 1981; Ellis 1994).

Though initially quite popular, the general countersubversive frame lost media, elite, and public support in 1920 as evidence disconfirming its claims mounted (Babb 1996). The credibility of countersubversive entrepreneurs, including Hoover and Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, was weakened when several predicted radical uprisings failed to materialize. As a result, fears of communist revolution in America deflated as quickly in 1920 as they had risen in 1919 (Coben 1963; Preston 1963; Powers 1987). The racialized version of the anticommunist frame had an even shorter public life. Despite Hoover's insistence that foreign agitation was at the root of racial unrest and the leaking of antiradical division document linking black discord with communists and other political radicals protests, the Department of Justice officially attributed the riots to local conditions (Ellis 1994).

The reorganization of the Bureau of Investigation<sup>1</sup> in 1924 both further discredited the anticommunist frame and all but guaranteed that it would one day be reborn. After the Bureau's entanglement in the Teapot Dome scandal raised further questions about the virtues of maintaining a national police force, Attorney General Harlan Stone ordered the agency to avoid political activities and limit itself to

criminal investigations. As a result, while local police and elected officials, landlords, and business owners often expressed concerns about the links between blacks and communists (c.f. Powers 1995; Solomon 1999), they did so without the support of the federal government for most of the 1920s and 1930s (O'Reilly 1983; Hill 1995).

Unlikely as it now seems, Hoover had not only survived the 1924 reorganization of the Bureau but had been promoted to director of the agency in a move generally hailed as a step towards professionalization and reform (Powers 1987). Always politically astute, Hoover played by Stone's rules until the right political opportunity arose in the late 1930s. When Roosevelt asked the FBI to restart political investigations in order to root out fascists and communists during the early years of World War II in Europe, Hoover seized the opportunity to rapidly expand the Bureau's capacity for political surveillance. When Roosevelt did not object to receiving reports on civil rights groups and racial unrest, beginning with intelligence information on A. Phillip Randolph's March on Washington Movement [MOWM] in 1941, Hoover took it as a signal that he could expand the FBI's investigations of racial politics (O'Reilly 1983; Hill 1995).

Within a year, Hoover had initiated a broad investigation of racial conditions [RACON] in the United States and was declaring that blacks had fallen prey to a 'fifth column of destruction' seeking to exploit 'the disloyal and the malcontent' in America and subvert the war effort (quoted in Hill 1995, p. 25; see also O'Reilly 1994). Bureau special agents collected information on blacks working in the defence industries, the black press, Communist party organizing among blacks, Islamic movements, racial conflicts within the military, and formal organizational activity, such as the MOWM and the NAACP (Hill 1995). Though the intensity of the investigations lessened after the war, Hoover continued to associate racial progress with subversiveness, sending the Truman White house reports attributing racial unrest to Communist Party agitation and labelling civil rights advocates, such as Mary McLeod Bethune, as Stalinists (O'Reilly 1994, p. 14).

It was also during the late 1940s that Hoover's FBI began to link changes in the depiction of blacks in the movies to the communist infiltration into the motion picture industry. The FBI had begun a broad investigation of the Communist threat in Hollywood in 1942, just two months after it had initiated its investigation of racial conditions in the United States. At first the FBI's investigation of communism in Hollywood followed the standard Bureau operating procedure for investigating alleged subversives, focusing on identifying individuals in the motion picture industry who had what the Bureau determined to be subversive beliefs or affiliations. By this method a subversive movie was identified by the associations of its makers. But the FBI soon concluded that if they were going to successfully argue that a movie was subversive

they would have to do more than claim that a known or suspected Communist had written, directed, or acted in it. Rather, they were going to have to 'state specifically what there is in a script or picture that is believed to be Communist propaganda.'<sup>2</sup>

To move from mapping associations to interpreting the content of motion pictures, the FBI needed a means of analysing the themes and images present in a movie. Hoover worried that while his agents were considered experts on Communism, they were not experts on movies (Noakes 2000). As a result, the Bureau adopted criteria developed by the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals [MPAPAI], a private group of anti-Communist Hollywood writers, producers, and directors. The MPAPAI had published a list of twelve 'common devices used to turn non-political pictures into carriers of political propaganda' to help the average moviegoer to identify what they argued were the deliberate, if often subtle, attempts to insert communist propaganda into otherwise entertaining movies.<sup>3</sup> As I have reviewed in greater detail elsewhere (Noakes 1998; 2000), the MPAPAI report instructed moviegoers to look for plot devices or dialogue that either smeared American institutions or ideals—such as the free enterprise system or success—or celebrated anti-American or pro-Communist institutions or ideals—for example, the collective or the 'common man' (see Table 1).

When the FBI began to apply the MPAPAI criteria to Hollywood movies in 1947, it determined that several popular and critically acclaimed movies, including *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), contained Communist propaganda. Among other things, the FBI argued, these two films presented demeaning portrayals of bankers, thus smearing an American institution. Negative portrayals of the military, the forces of law and order, the American form of government, and Catholicism earned other movies the subversive label. At the same time, positive portrayals of life in Russia, lawbreakers, depravity, the poor and common man, and various forms of economic mortality were considered evidence of attempts to glorify pro-Communist values (Noakes 2000).

Though the MPAPAI report mentioned race only in passing, the FBI soon developed a racialized version of the organization's criteria for determining if a movie was subversive. In doing so, the FBI revealed its fundamental assumptions about the American racial order. In its interpretation of how racial dynamics were portrayed in movies, the FBI associated whiteness with Americanism and blackness with subversion. Movies that suggested that America had a racial problem or that otherwise 'good' (that is, white) Americans harboured racial attitudes were classified as smears of American values and institutions. The portrayal of blacks in too positive a light was considered glorification of values and institutions considered to be anti-American or pro-Communist.

**Table 1.** FBI's criteria for determining if a motion picture contained communist propaganda, with general and racialized examples.

---

<b>Criteria</b>	
<i>Category I:</i>	values or institutions judged to be particularly American are smeared or represented as evil in movies, either explicitly or through casual references to current political issues
<i>Category II:</i>	values or institutions judged to be particularly anti-American or Pro-Communist are glorified in the movie, either explicitly or through casual conversation
<b>General Examples</b>	
<i>Category I:</i>	the free enterprise system; industrialists; wealth; the profit motive; success; the independent man
<i>Category II:</i>	failure; depravity; the common man; the collective
<b>Racialized Examples</b>	
<i>Category I:</i>	suggesting that America has a race problem; suggesting that 'good' (white) Americans harbor racist attitudes
<i>Category II:</i>	portraying black characters in a more positive light than white characters.

---

Applying the MPAPAI criteria in this way, the FBI identified several movies in which the portrayal of black characters or of racial conditions in the United States suggested that the movies contained Communist propaganda.

The FBI's reports on these motion pictures are found in a microfilm collection of FBI documents released to historian Daniel Leab (1991) in response to a request filed under the Freedom of Information Act [FOIA]. This collection, which fills seventeen rolls of microfilm, includes all materials released by the FBI regarding its investigation of communist activities in the motion picture industry between 1942 and 1958. Editing of this material was minimal. As part of a larger project, I have reviewed all the FBI's reports on individual movies, numbering just over 200, during this period (Noakes 1998, 2000). Most of the reports on these 200 movies include only information on the political associations of the movie makers, but for a period of approximately two years (1947–48), FBI special agents filed detailed reports on individual motion pictures, including interpretations of the themes and plots of movies it considered subversive. In this article, I analyse the reviews from this period that explicitly mention racial dynamics, including two movies, *Crossfire* (1947) and *Gentleman's Agreement* (1948), which explored anti-Semitism in the US. The FBI referred to Jews as a 'race' separate from gentiles, thus its interpretation of these movies provide an interesting parallel to the Bureau's analyses of movies about blacks and racism.

Before discussing the movies that the FBI identified as racially subversive, I review the struggles over the portrayal of blacks in Hollywood movies during the 1930s and 1940s. Then, I consider the FBI's interpretation of motion pictures featuring black characters or addressing race relations in the United States. In the last section of the article I place the FBI's racial project in the context of both anticommunism and the racial politics of the era.

### **The Portrayal of blacks in Hollywood movies**

When the FBI began to interpret Hollywood movies in search of evidence of racial subversion, it quickly found itself at odds with the evolving racial politics of the motion picture industry. By the late 1940s, a long struggle over how blacks should be depicted in Hollywood movies had just been won by the forces of racial progress. Since 1934, when the motion picture industry began enforcing a production code on itself that regulated how race, among other things, would be represented in Hollywood movies, the portrayal of black characters had been a contested terrain. The industry production code was enforced by what became commonly known as the Hays Office, a division of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association. As originally instituted, the production code reflected 'a blend of conservative Roman Catholic morality and bourgeois propriety' (Muscio 1997, p. 34). Along with curbing the exposure of skin and the discussion or enactment of sex, the code banned the mention of homosexuality, abortion and birth control, prohibited profanity and a broad range of slang terms, and mandated the respectful treatment of political, judicial, and religious institutions. Regulating racial representations, the production code banned depictions of miscegenation, discouraged the examination of social issues, and forbade ethnic namecalling. All this was in an effort to prevent the production of a motion picture which would 'lower the moral standards of those who [saw] it, present an incorrect standard of life, or ridicule natural or human law' (Koppes and Black 1987, p. 15; see also Muscio 1997; Schatz 1997).

Given its preference that movies be purely entertaining and its insistence that no nationality should be portrayed as universally bad, the Hays Office proved poorly suited for duty during World War II. Prior to the United States' entry into the war, for example, it had objected to several anti-Nazi pictures because they failed to portray Hitler's achievements and signalled a move away from film as a purely entertainment medium. Hays Office head Joseph Breen tried to persuade Warner Brothers not to film *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), even though it was based on transcripts from a court trial, and initially discouraged Charlie Chaplin from making *The Great Dictator* (1940).

Seeking to capitalize on the propaganda capacity of motion pictures to

bolster the war effort, the Roosevelt administration moved quickly after the United States' entry into the war to supersede the Hays Office. The Office of War Information [OWI] was created to, among other things, monitor the content of Hollywood movies. Among its concerns was that the negative portrayal of blacks was contradictory to the fight against fascism and its ideology of white supremacy, and, perhaps more importantly, that it threatened to undermine the morale of blacks at a time when their loyalty and labour were needed to win the war. As a result, the OWI pressed movie studios to avoid demeaning stereotypes of blacks (Schatz 1997).

At the same time the movie studios faced similar pressures from a different source, the NAACP. In late 1942, NAACP secretary Walter White, accompanied by Wendell Wilkie, the just defeated Republican nominee for President and chairman of the board at Twentieth Century Fox, travelled to Hollywood to ask the motion picture studios to voluntarily bring an end to the 'dangerous and harmful stereotypes' spread about blacks in Hollywood movies. White beseeched studio heads to '[s]hake off [their] fears and taboos and depict the Negro in films as a normal human being and an integral part of the life of America and the world' (White 1948, p. 201; see also Vaughn 1992).

Initially, it appeared as if the twin efforts of the OWI and the NAACP would result in changes in how blacks were depicted in Hollywood movies. OWI could not formally order a studio to change a film, but working in cooperation with the Office of Censorship, which decided which films could be distributed overseas, it used a combination of moral suasion and the threat of refusing overseas distribution rights to shape the message of war-time movies. Major studios were prodded into producing pro-black documentaries, altering scripts and, in a few cases, changing parts of completed films to improve the portrayal of black characters. Meanwhile, White and Wilkie felt they had been warmly received by the Hollywood elite and, more importantly, left town with a promise from the studio heads that they would try to avoid casting black actors exclusively in stereotypically demeaning roles, increase the presence of black extras in the movies, and employ more blacks in technical jobs (Cripps 1977).

But by war's end it was clear that those supporting the racial status quo in Hollywood movies had held their ground. Resistance to changes came from two disparate sources. Southern theatre owners refused to exhibit movies that depicted blacks as anything but subservient to whites. As a result, directors would, in some cases, place black performances in their film in such a way that they could be excised from the version shown in the South without unduly disrupting the flow of the motion picture. But it was much simpler for the studios to simply avoid casting black actors altogether. For this reason, the NAACP's efforts were also opposed by a small coterie of regularly employed black actors and actresses who

feared that movie producers would cut back the on-screen appearances by blacks rather than try to negotiate the increasingly complicated politics of racial representation. Black actors and actresses therefore urged White to leave Hollywood just as it was.

Under pressure from Southern politicians, OWI had deemphasized its efforts to improve the depiction of blacks in Hollywood movies by mid-1943 (Cripps 1982). The promises made by the motion picture studios also went largely unfulfilled. There was some improvement in the depiction of blacks in US Army films and Hollywood war movies, and a few notably positive black characters, including Sam in *Casablanca* (1942), appeared in major movies (Koppes and Black 1987). Moreover, emerging black stars, such as Lena Horne, gained slightly bigger and better roles. But as film historian Thomas Schatz (1997, p. 273) has concluded, 'writing out black characters and racial issues was easier than relearning race relations for wartime Hollywood.' Thus, while most film industry unions experienced a boost during the 'popular front' years that resulted from US alliance with the Soviet Union against fascism (Horne 2001), membership in the black actors' union fell by half during the war. Though some of this was undoubtedly due to the exigencies of the war, it also reflected a shrinking number of roles available to blacks.

When black characters did appear in wartime movies, 'Hollywood found it difficult to abandon its time worn demeaning portrayal of blacks' (Koppes and Black 1987, p. 179). An OWI analysis of appearances by blacks in movies during 1942 and early 1943 found that black characters continued to be portrayed as 'basically different from other people, as taking no relevant part in the life of the nation, as affecting nothing, contributing nothing, and expecting nothing' (Koppes and Black 1987, p. 179). Black characters had appeared in 23 per cent of films released during the period under study and were depicted as inferior in 82 per cent of them. Two years later, a study undertaken by Columbia University found that little had changed. In a sample of one hundred appearances by blacks in wartime films, three quarters perpetuated old stereotypes, 13 per cent of the portrayals were neutral, and only 12 per cent were positive (Koppes and Black 1987; O'Neill 1993).

With so little changed, White renewed his campaign to improve the depiction of blacks in Hollywood movies after the war. This time the NAACP gained an ally in the Screen Actors Guild [SAG] which, in the autumn of 1946, passed a resolution opposing racial discrimination and established a committee to work with screen writers, directors, and producers to find ways to portray blacks in a more realistic manner. The following spring, after a meeting with the committee, producers announced an agreement similar to the one that had been reached with the NAACP just a few years earlier: black actors and actresses would be used to portray black characters, thus all but putting an end to blackface portrayals; the producers would work harder to include blacks in crowd

scenes and in roles in which no race was specified; and scripts would be written so that blacks were portrayed as ordinary human beings, rather than stereotyped caricatures.

This time changes in the depiction of black characters were apparent. SAG dissolved its committee in October 1947, citing statistics that the number of black roles had increased and concerns that renewed pressure on producers would harm the cause of black actors and actresses.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons behind the changes in how blacks were depicted was the decision by the major motion picture studios to produce and promote new genres of motion pictures. Believing that Americans were tired of war and war movies, the major studios turned to *film noir* and the social problem drama, both of which invited the examination of race and racial dynamics.

*Film noir* were 'dark in both storyline and physical texture' and explored the margins of society and the outcasts that lived in its shadows (Nachbar 1988, p. 65). With the contrast between darkness and light dominating the visual presentation of *film noir*, race served as one of the many vehicles for exploring the seamy side of American life. Social problem dramas utilized the tensions inherent in American society, such as mental illness and crime, as devices for creating drama and building plots. Among the wide range of issues explored in the social problem drama, several movies in the late 1940s explored race relations in American society.

### Race and subversiveness

To the NAACP, the depiction of blacks in such movies was a long awaited step towards a fuller and more positive representation of the black experience in America. To the FBI, however, the changing representation of blacks in Hollywood movies was evidence that Communists had infiltrated the motion picture industry. Race has played a muted role in the history of the Red Scare in Hollywood. Black actors and writers did not bear the brunt of the blacklist and those suspected of subversiveness could often avoid the naming of names to clear their own. Instead, some black actors, such as Canada Lee, were instructed to demonstrate their loyalty by denouncing Paul Robeson, who had fled to Europe to escape both anti-communist crusaders and the limiting and demeaning roles offered black actors in Hollywood (Navasky 1980; Gill 1981). Robeson's unabashed embrace of radical politics had made him a favourite target of anticommunist forces. His enormous talent and his refusal to kowtow to power had made him a martyr to many in the black community (Duberman 1988).

This peculiarly racialized degradation ceremony notwithstanding, the Hollywood Red Scare is generally not seen as a racialized historical phenomenon. If race is mentioned at all it is in the context of the biography of various individual black actors whose lives were changed by

the blacklist and the politics of internal subversion that gave rise to it – from Robeson's exile, to Lee's tragic death, to the carefully negotiated loyalty of emerging stars like Lena Horne and Harry Belafonte (c.f. Ceplair and Englund 1980; Navasky 1980; Schrecker 1999).

The racialization of the MPAPAI criteria for determining if movies contained Communist propaganda, however, indicates that concerns about changing racial dynamics lurked just below the surface of public discussions of the Red Scare in Hollywood. Though the FBI did not formally outline its criteria for determining if racially subversive propaganda had been inserted into Hollywood movies, a careful reading of its reviews of movies featuring black characters or exploring racial themes reveals three 'devices' that the FBI considered evidence that Communist inspired racial propaganda had been inserted in a motion picture: the portrayal of black characters in too positive a light; paying undue influence to race relations; and attributing racism to otherwise 'decent' (that is, white) Americans. It was, generally speaking therefore, the changes resulting from the demands of the NAACP and SAG that raised the suspicions of the FBI.

*When only black characters are good*

At the heart of the NAACP's Hollywood campaign was a plea to the movie studios to stop making

tarts of Negro's daughters, crap shooters of his sons, obsequious Uncle Toms of his fathers, superstitious and grotesque crones of his mothers, strutting peacocks of successful men, psalm-singing mountebanks of his priests, and Barnum and Bailey side show of his religion. (Koppes and Black 1986, p. 145)

Progress in the representation of blacks can be seen in several movies released in the late 1940s. Two of these motion pictures – *Body and Soul* (1947) and *Hazard* (1948) – drew the attention of FBI special agents. In both, a single black character with little social status but more dignity than those around him recognizes the inherent goodness in the corrupted lead white character.

In *Body and Soul* (1947), for example, Ben, the only significant black character in the movie, is represented as a noble, if mistreated, former boxing champion. The movie, which starred John Garfield, earned several Academy Award nominations and helped to define the boxing film genre (Grindon 1996). The plot centres on Charley Davis, a poor, young fighter willing to compromise his values and sacrifice those who love him in order to reach the top of the boxing game. After his skills begin to decline, however, Charley agrees to throw a title fight, making way for a dishonest promoter's newest stooge to replace him as

champion. But several events, including the death of Ben, who Charley had beaten for the title and later hired as his trainer, lead Charley to reassess his life and renege on his agreement.

Ben's death reveals to Charley the down side of selling one's soul for a shot at fame and fortune. As Charley learns late in the movie, Ben was manipulated into fighting his championship fight against Charley despite a dangerous medical condition. Moreover, Charley realizes that Ben had been told that Charley was in on the fix when he had not been, thus putting Ben at an even greater risk for injury. After Charley realizes in the middle of his last title defence that he has been set up just like Ben, he decides not to throw the fight. Charley's dramatic victory effectively ends his boxing career, but his decision not to throw the fight redeems his soul. Though Ben is manipulated by the promoters, he is portrayed not as an obsequious Uncle Tom, but as a victim who understands he is being exploited but, because of his failing health, is powerless to save himself.

In *Hazard* (1948), a mediocre romantic comedy-drama starring Paulette Goddard, a compulsive lady gambler is chased by a private detective after defaulting on an agreement to marry the winner of a dice game. The only character in the movie who sees the good in Goddard's character is a black porter, who is portrayed as a Sunday school teacher, uninterested in gambling. The porter attempts to save Goddard's character from herself by trying to persuade her to leave a craps game at a hotel. According to the FBI's report on *Hazard*, the race of the porter would have been changed to white had Goddard not insisted that she would not appear in the movie unless the black character remained in the film.<sup>5</sup> Paramount Studios was worried that casting a black as a porter would hurt sales in the South and violate their agreement with the SAG not to portray blacks in stereotyped roles.

As heartening as these positive representations of black characters must have been to the NAACP, to the FBI they signalled the influence of Communists in Hollywood. One of the indications of Communist subversion identified by the FBI using the MPAPAI criteria was the portrayal of white characters in the same film. Unable to decouple blackness from subversiveness, the FBI interpreted the positive portrayal of blacks as an attempt to glorify values and institutions it considered anti-American or pro-Communist.

The FBI considered the portrayal of the boxing promoter in *Body and Soul* as corrupt to be an example of putting 'the rich and successful man in a bad light,' thus smearing the American value of success. From the Bureau's perspective, this standard complaint was made all the more dangerous by the portrayal of Ben, the only black character in the movie, as the 'finest character of them all':<sup>6</sup>

The negro fighting while injured, and his manager knowing it may be his death, and the negro refusing a bribe while the white man accepts

it, shows the former as noble and sympathetic character, while the successful promoter is shown as an unscrupulous, dishonest, and heartless character.<sup>7</sup>

It is this subversion of the racial hierarchy that the FBI considered 'the principle form of propaganda' in *Body and Soul*.

Similarly, the FBI complained that the black porter in *Hazard* was the 'first character with any good qualities in the film'<sup>8</sup>:

up to this point no character appearing in the picture has any good qualities, all are hoodlums, gamblers, and underworld persons . . . When they appear in court all of them are low underworld characters except the negro . . . The negro appears as a fine, upstanding individual in comparison to everyone else in the cast.<sup>9</sup>

The FBI does not acknowledge the irony that a role SAG considered too demeaning for a black character to play it considered so positive as to suggest subversive intent on the part of filmmakers. Instead, it considers Goddard's off-screen attempts to navigate the intricate politics of racial representation further reason to be suspicious of the film.

*When addressing racial prejudice just makes things worse*

When Richard Wright responded to a World War II draft notice by writing on the registration that he considered the conditions of his induction into a segregated Army 'excruciatingly degrading and humiliating', the FBI concluded that the writer's 'interest in the problem of the Negro has become almost an obsession' (Rowley 2001, p. 285). The Bureau's own interest in this problem, of course, was more than casual. Mere contemplation by Paramount Studios of a script entitled *Unwind Your Dreams*, in which blacks were subjected to 'intense cruelty' by white characters, was recorded by FBI special agents in Los Angeles, who concluded that the production of such a film would 'tend to cause racial agitation'.<sup>10</sup> The Bureau also took note of the Jules Dassin's interest in inserting scenes depicting integrated prison cells and racial strife in his prison drama *Brute Force* (1947). Only the insistence of the film's technical adviser that this would be contrary to established prison regulations prevented this example of 'a definite Communist conspiracy among certain producers, directors, and writers' from appearing in the film.<sup>11</sup>

With social problem dramas prominent, several movies exploring race relations in American society were produced in the late 1940s. The most prominent of these was *Home of the Brave* (1949), which addressed racial prejudice in the military. Based on a play about anti-Semitism, *Home of the Brave* was part of both the tentative return to war-related movies and the cycle of race-related movies produced by Hollywood at

the end of the 1940s (Schatz 1997). The film version explored the psychiatric treatment of a black GI in the aftermath of World War II. Through flashbacks the audience learns that the cause of the soldier's psychiatric trauma is the racist treatment that he received within his platoon during the war.

Anti-Semitism was another prominent theme in social problem drama. The plot of *Crossfire*, which blended 'the dark expressionism of *film noir* ... with the realism and social impulse of the message picture' (Schatz 1997, p. 5), revolved around the investigation of the murder of a Jewish man in Washington DC. The victim was last seen in the company of several servicemen who, having difficulty adjusting to life after the war, were delaying indefinitely their transition back to civilian life. The film's challenge to American society was considerably weaker than the novel on which it was based, which chronicled the racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia of American society by examining the murder of a gay man. In fact, during a lengthy speech on the history of racial hatred in America, the district attorney omits blacks from a narrative that includes Irish Catholics, Jews, Protestants, and Quakers.

The FBI considered the exploration of racial themes in *Home of the Brave* and *Crossfire* to be an excessive criticism of American life, the only effect of which could be the fanning of the flames of racial conflict in order to undermine American democracy. Arguing that the purpose of *Home of the Brave* was to subvert race relations in the United States, the FBI concluded that it was

100% propaganda of a Communist racial character. It is a purported plea for tolerance and equality for the Negro, but the propaganda injected will only arouse more racial agitation, seemingly the purpose for its injection.<sup>12</sup>

Similar objections were raised about *Crossfire*. Though the movie earned a great deal of praise in Hollywood (Ceplair and Englund 1980), the FBI objected to the negative portrayal of the military ('the Army will resent depicting a soldier as showing hatred'), and the police ('the producer and director ... have taken a subtle thrust at our police by showing the soldier murderer as a former cop and by the police captain saying nobody likes cops'). Moreover, the FBI concluded that *Crossfire* was

near treasonable in its implications and seeming effects to arouse race and religious hatred, through misleading accusations. The use of a drunken, maladjusted soldier to typify our courageous service men and the use of minority groups to arouse suspicion and sympathy.<sup>13</sup>

Unduly emphasizing 'the racial angle' was, in the FBI's opinion, 'decidedly the wrong approach to overcome racial hatred.'<sup>14</sup>

*When bad things are attributed to decent people*

The FBI's association of whiteness with Americanism is further revealed in its interpretation of movies in which otherwise 'decent' whites were portrayed as racists. Like movies that focused unduly on racism, suggesting that whites were racists was considered demeaning to American values or institutions. In its review of *Pride of the Marines* (1945), the story of a Marine blinded while fighting the war in the Pacific, for example, the FBI concluded that screenwriter Albert Maltz, who the FBI identified as a Communist, and producer Delmar Daves

dragged the Old Party Line into their love story about as gracefully as if they were lugging a dead bear up a flight of stairs into the boudoir. They say everything they can think of to provoke doubts concerning representative government and the free enterprise system. Employers are accused of everything from racial prejudice to a conspiracy to scuttle the G. I. Bill of Rights.<sup>15</sup>

Similar charges were made about *The Best Years of Our Lives*, winner of several Academy Awards in 1946, including Best Picture. According to the FBI, the writers of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, deliberately associated criticisms of Russia with 'anti-Semitism, Jim Crowism (and) Ku Kluxism', utilizing 'a trick taught to all young writers in the Communist indoctrination schools.'<sup>16</sup>

The FBI considered *The Best Years of Our Lives*, which chronicles the adjustments required of three soldiers returning to the same small town, 'superb propaganda.'<sup>17</sup> Among its concerns was the treatment of a man who criticizes Russia. One of the returning veterans finds himself doing a demeaning job behind a drug store food counter under the supervision of a young, non-veteran. While at work one day he encounters an obnoxious patron who loudly complains about the United Nations, the Soviet Union, and the strength of American democracy in a tirade that includes racist and anti-Semitic commentary. The serviceman punches him in the nose. From the FBI's perspective the racism and anti-Semitism were injected into the speech to degrade the criticism of Russia in the minds of the viewers:

Of course, the poke must be justified. So the international comments are interlaced with a scurrilous tirade against the Negroes and the Jews. Now if [producer] Samuel Goldwyn wished to indict Ku Kluxism, why didn't he confine this villain's dialogue to Ku Klux remarks. All American would agree with him in condemning that.<sup>18</sup>

This argument, of course, conveniently overlooked the FBI's own criticism of movies that unduly emphasized race and therefore only aroused more racial agitation.

Similar objections were raised about the depictions of 'racial hatred' in the script for a movie entitled *The American Crime*. Already maintaining a file of one of the directors, Faith Elliot, whom it classified as a 'known Communist', the FBI 'believed that the substance of [the] script indicates Communist propaganda.' Specifically, the movie pointed out that there was no federal anti-lynching legislation, portrayed 'decent people' as racist and anti-Semitic, and equated white supremacy with American supremacy.<sup>19</sup>

Once again, parallels can be drawn to the FBI's interpretation of movies addressing anti-Semitism. In *Gentleman's Agreement*, one of a string of 'realistic, male-centered social problem films' that gained critical and box office success in the aftermath of World War II, a journalist posed as a Jew in order to write about anti-Semitism (Schatz 1997, p. 359). The movie won three Academy Awards in 1947, including Best Picture and Best Director, and helped Gregory Peck, who portrayed the journalist, to establish his screen persona as a decent and reliable hero. What the FBI noticed, however, was that 'someone responsible for the production of the picture' had taken a 'deliberate slap at law enforcement' by depicting a uniformed police officer as 'a party to anti-semitism'.<sup>20</sup> Comparing the FBI's defence of those accused of being anti-Semitic with its complaints about the depictions of Catholicism in motion pictures reveals the Bureau's racial project. The FBI considered the depiction of Catholicism as 'revoltingly cruel' in *In Place of Splendor* evidence, in and of itself, of subversive intent.<sup>21</sup> But while attacks on Catholics were considered evidence of subversive intent, negative depiction of Jews, considered a separate race by the FBI, were, much like attacks on blacks, only considered subversive if attached to American institutions or otherwise 'decent' (white, gentile) people.

### Exceptions

The FBI did not label all movies dealing with racial issues as subversive. *Intruders in the Dust* (1949), for example, appears to have escaped the FBI's attention altogether. The FBI established reviewed other films that dealt with racial issues, such as *Pinky*, one of the most popular films of 1949, but found no evidence of communist propaganda. *Pinky* tells the story of a light-skinned-black woman who, after passing as white in the North, foregoes her white existence upon returning to the South. In retrospect, critics consider it one of the films that signalled a new period of black representation in film making, in which the 'black body ... became a means of signifying white racism' rather than danger to the audience (Patton 1995, p. 70). 'Showing *Pinky* as a victim of Southern racism', Michael Rogin (1996, pp. 223–4) argues, 'broke a Hollywood taboo, especially since passing raised questions about the racial purity of anyone claiming to be white'.

Objecting to the extensive depiction of a black woman, censors in Marshall, Texas and other Southern cities banned the showing of the film (Sayre 1982; Patton 1995). But the FBI did not categorize *Pinky* as subversive, and the rationale for this omission highlights the essential arbitrariness underlying this whole process. Noting that the *Daily Worker*, considered the movies' apparent acceptance of racial segregation in the South 'reactionary', the reviewer concludes that 'the commie motion picture cells went after' *Pinky* and two other films 'because each . . . was in direct contradiction to a great propaganda medium for the Soviets—our race situation as it concerns the Negro.'<sup>22</sup> Having premiered in October 1949, well after the FBI had ceded primary responsibility for policing the political content of Hollywood movies to HUAC, it is perhaps understandable that the FBI did not subject this movie to the same scrutiny as earlier movies. But one of the two other movies listed in the report on *Pinky* as refuting Soviet propaganda on American race relations was *Home of the Brave*, which, as we have seen, was identified as an attempt to subvert race relations in the United States just a few months earlier.

### Discussion

The FBI's interpretation of positive depictions of black characters in Hollywood movies produced in the late 1940s as subversive and its conclusion that movies about racial issues were calculated to arouse racial unrest stand in stark contradiction to the Truman administration's liberal racial project. Persuaded by the argument that racial inequality was *America's* dilemma, and concerned about the affect of America's racial problems on its efforts to win the hearts and minds of newly independent nations in the Third World, the Truman administration promoted federal legislation to redistribute social, economic and political resources in the interest of black Americans. Moreover, Truman's Department of Justice, the federal department in which the FBI was housed, argued before the Supreme Court in support of the NAACP's position that the restrictive covenants were unconstitutional and filed a brief in support of desegregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The contrast between the Truman administration's racial project and the conservative racial project embraced by the FBI provides support for Omi and Winant's (1994, pp. 82–3) argument that the state is 'inherently racial' but 'the various state institutions do not serve one coordinated racial objective.' In fact, as was the case with the FBI and the Truman Department of Justice, 'they may work at cross purposes.' At the same time that the Truman administration was pushing racial progress as a bulwark against Soviet expansion, the countersubversive anticommunist master frame that Hoover utilized to interpret the world reduced racial progress, in movies and elsewhere, to communist agitation. Hoover's resurrection of this once discredited interpretation of racial dynamics

can be attributed to the FBI's capacity to serve as a structure of abeyance for the conservative racial project.

Social movement scholars argue that 'repertoires of interpretation' persist over time in 'structures of abeyance' (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1994; Mooney and Hunt 1996). These formal or informal institutions function as 'halfway houses,' sustaining master frames and providing entrepreneurs with knowledge of past movement frames until a new period of mobilization makes them relevant once more (Morris 1984; Swart 1995; Mooney and Hunt 1996). Movement entrepreneurs can, when political opportunities ripen, draw on these ideological themes to 'reinterpret and reconstruct systems of meaning already present in their life worlds' (Mooney and Hunt 1996, p. 179). Similar arguments can be made about state agencies (Noakes 2000). In this case, the FBI served as a structure of abeyance for the arguments linking racial progress to subversiveness. When political opportunities ripened during and after World War II, the FBI once again mobilized both the conservative racial project and the countersubversive master frame, providing the legitimacy of the federal agency to the claim that those who advocated equal citizenship rights for black Americans were trying to subvert the American way of life.

The relationship between race and subversiveness is therefore two-dimensional. That is, the FBI not only mobilized anticommunist bias against blacks, but also antiblack bias against Communists. Examination of the FBI's analyses of how black and race relations were represented in Hollywood movies during the late 1940s reveals the most direct evidence yet of the FBI's deep-seated institutional assumptions about race. Many have argued that Hoover was racist and his agency reflected this ideology in numerous ways, including the labelling of all black activists as subversive (c.f.: Theoharis and Cox 1988; O'Reilly 1989). But the FBI's interpretation of movies featuring black characters or race relations in American society reveals not merely racialized strategies adopted by the FBI, but racialized processes, as well.

It is therefore now possible to definitively put to rest the FBI's claim that civil right movements were dangerous not because they upset the racial status quo, *per se*, but because they threatened to achieve the ends favoured by communists (Garrow 1981). In its analysis of the subversive content of movies the FBI moved beyond the assignment of guilt by association. By explaining not only *that* a script was subversive, but also *why*, the FBI revealed its association of whiteness with Americanism and blackness with subversion.

It is in this context that we can connect the FBI's investigation of movie representations of blacks and its counterintelligence program [COINTELPRO] against black activists in the 1960s. Hill (1995) has traced the bureaucratic history of the FBI's World War II investigation into 'Foreign Inspired Agitation Among the American Negroes' through several name changes and reorganizations, through various

entanglements with investigations of Communist activities in the United States, and, finally, to the COINTELPRO targeting the so-called 'Black Hate Group' in the late 1960s. The FBI's investigation of movies about race in the late 1940s deepens our understanding of this history, helping to link the FBI's World War II investigations of racial conditions in the United States and later operations.

Moreover, it provides us with further insight into why Hoover continued to investigate nonviolent civil rights groups such as the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC] well after FBI special agents had established their autonomy from the Communist Party. In 1963, William Sullivan, head of the Research Section of the FBI's Domestic Intelligence Division sent a memo to Hoover declaring that '(t)here has been an obvious failure of the Communist Party of the United States to appreciably infiltrate, influence, or control large numbers of American Negroes in this country' (quoted in Powers 1987, p. 135). Hoover rejected Sullivan's conclusions and threatened to end his career at the Bureau. For over forty years the Bureau had operated under the set of assumptions laid bare in its interpretations of Hollywood movies: not only that communists inspired racial agitation, but that blackness was the equivalent of subversiveness. Fearing for his job and that of those who worked directly under him, Sullivan recanted his previous report and issued a series of severe reports that, among other things, suggested that the FBI might have to go beyond legal means to confront the subversive threat in the civil rights movement (Powers 1987; Theoharis and Cox 1988).

As Anthony Marx (1998, p. 5) argues '[c]itizenship is the key institutional mechanism for establishing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the nation-state.' The FBI's vigorous engagement in the conservative racial project between 1910–1970 helped to construct and reinforce racial boundaries in the United States that prevented blacks from achieving full citizenship rights well into the twentieth century. The FBI's interpretation of racial themes and black characters in movies produced in the late 1940s represents a relatively minor piece of this racial project. Its significance can be found, however, in the movement of the movie studios towards purely entertaining movies in the 1950s. The premature deaths of both the social problem film and the *film noir* genre in the 1950s was caused by political pressures, not box office concerns (Schatz 1997). The positive portrayals of black characters and the exploration of American racism in Hollywood movies must therefore be counted among the victims of McCarthyism.

## Notes

1. The Bureau of Investigation was renamed the *Federal Bureau of Investigation* in 1935.

2. Hood to Hoover, 2 April 1945, Leab (1991), Reel 2, Frame 20.
3. Special Agent Report, Los Angeles, 'Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 7 August 1947, Leab (1991), Reel 3, Frame 134.
4. SAG had disbanded the committee once before, in March 1947, after months of inactivity under original chairman Gregory Peck. The committee was reconstituted under new leadership after the complaints of black members.
5. Summary of the Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 15 July 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 13, Frame 929.
6. Special Agent Report, Los Angeles, 'Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 7 August 1947, Leab (1991), Reel 3, Frame 223.
7. Ibid.
8. 'Summary of the Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 15 July 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 13, Frame 929.
9. Ibid.
10. Special Agent Report, Los Angeles, 'Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 27 October 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 4, Frames 800–01.
11. Special Agent Report, Los Angeles, 'Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 7 August 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 3, Frames 168–9.
12. Special Agent Report, Los Angeles, 'Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 8 July 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 4, Frames 692–4.
13. 'Summary of the Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 15 July 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 13, Frame 167.
14. Ibid.
15. 'Summary of the Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', Attached to Fletcher to Ladd, 29 July 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 13, Frames 890–1.
16. Special Agent Report, Los Angeles, 'Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 7 August 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 3, Frame 159.
17. Ibid., Frames 157.
18. Ibid., Frame 159–60.
19. Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Los Angeles to Director, 15 August 1947, Leab (1991), Reel 3, Frame 57.
20. Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Los Angeles to Director, 21 February 1948, Leab (1991), Reel 3, Frame 68.
21. 'Summary of the Communist Infiltration into the Motion Picture Industry', 15 July 1949, Leab (1991), Reel 13, Frames 921.
22. 'Current Film Productions of Interest', 11 January 11 1950, Leab (1991), Reel 4, Frame 950.

## References

- BABB, SARAH 1996 "'A true American system of finance": frame resonance in the U.S. labor movement, 1866 to 1886', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 61, no. 6, pp. 1033–52
- CEPLAIR, LARRY and ENGLUND, STEVEN 1980 *Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930–1960*, Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press
- COBEN, STANLEY 1963 *A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician*, New York: Columbia University Press
- CRIPPS, THOMAS 1977 *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900–1942*, New York: Oxford University Press
- 1982 Movies, race, and World War II: *Tennessee Johnson* as an anticipation of the strategies of the Civil Rights Movement, *Prologue*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 49–66
- CRIPPS, THOMAS and CULBERT, DAVID 1979 'The Negro Soldier (1944): Film propaganda in black and white', *American Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. X, pp. 616–40
- DUBERMAN, MARTIN B. 1988 *Paul Robeson*. New York: Knopf

- ELLIS, MARK 1994 'J. Edgar Hoover and the "Red Summer" of 1919', *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 39–59
- GARROW, DAVID 1981 *The FBI and Martin Luther King*, New York: Norton & Co.
- GILL, GLENDA E. 1981 'Careerist and casualty: the rise and fall of Canada Lee', *Freedomways*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 15–27
- GRINDON, LEGER 1996 'Body and soul: the structure of meaning in the boxing film genre', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 54–69
- HILL, ROBERT 1995 *The FBI's RACON: Racial Conditions in the United States During World War II*, Boston: Northeastern University Press
- HORNE, GERALD 2001 *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930–1950*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press
- KOPPE, CLAYTON R. and BLACK, GREGORY D. 1986 'Blacks, loyalty, and motion-picture propaganda in World War II', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 73, no. 2, pp. 383–406
- 1987 *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*, New York: The Free Press
- KRYDER, DAVID 2000 *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State during World War II*, New York: Cambridge University Press
- LEAB, DANIEL (ed.) 1991 'Communist Activity in the Entertainment Industry: FBI Surveillance Files on Hollywood, 1942–1958', Microfilm Collection, University Publications of America
- LEVINE, MICHAEL L. 1996 *African Americans and Civil Rights*, Phoenix: Oryx Press
- MARX, ANTHONY 1998 *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil*, New York: Cambridge University Press
- MCADAM, DOUG 1982 *Political Process and the Development of the Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- MCCULLOUGH, DAVID 1992 *Truman*, New York: Simon and Schuster
- MOONEY, PATRICK and HUNT, SCOTT 1996 'A repertoire of interpretations: master frames and ideological continuity in US agrarian mobilization', *Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 177–97
- MORRIS, ALDON 1984 *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, New York: Free Press
- MUSCIO, GIULIANA 1997 *Hollywood's New Deal*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press
- NACHBAR, JACK 1988 'Film Noir', pp. 65–84, in Wes D. Gehring (ed.), *Handbook of American Film Genres*, New York: Greenwood Press
- NAVASKY, VICTOR 1980 *Naming Names*, New York: The Viking Press
- NOAKES, JOHN 1998 'Bankers and common men in Bedford Falls: how the FBI determined that *It's A Wonderful Life* was a subversive movie', *Film History* vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 311–319
- 2000 'Official frames in social movement theory: the FBI, HUAC, and the Communist threat in Hollywood', *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 659–78
- OMI, MICHAEL and WINANT, HOWARD 1994 *Racial Formation in the United States* (2nd. edn), New York: Routledge
- O'NEILL, WILLIAM 1993 *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- O'REILLY, KENNETH 1983 'The FBI and the origins of McCarthyism', *The Historian*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 372–93
- 1989 *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret Files on Black Americans, 1960–1972*, New York: Free Press
- 1994 *Black Americans: The FBI Files*, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc
- PATTON, CINDY 1995 'White racism/black signs: censorship and the images of race relations', *Journal of Communications*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 65–77
- POWERS, RICHARD GID 1995 *Not Without Honor*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

- 1987 *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover*, New York: Free Press
- PRESTON, WILLIAM 1963 *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903–1933*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- ROGIN, MICHAEL 1996 *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
- ROWLEY, HAZEL 2001 *Richard Wright: The Life and Times*, New York: Henry Holt
- SAYRE, NORA 1982 *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*, New York: Dial Press
- SCHATZ, THOMAS 1997 *History of the American Cinema*, vol. 6, 1940–1949. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons
- SCHRECKER, ELLEN 1999 *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, New York: Little, Brown and Company
- SITKOFF, HARVARD 1971 'Harry Truman and the election of 1948: the coming of age of civil rights in American politics', *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 597–616
- SOLOMON, MARK 1999 *The Cry Was Unity*, Jackson, Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press
- SULLIVAN, PATRICIA 1996 *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press
- SWART, WILLIAM J. 1995 'The League of Nations and the Irish question: master frames, cycles of protest and "master frame alignment"', *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 465–81
- TARROW, SIDNEY 1994 *Power in Movement*, New York: Cambridge University Press
- THEOHARIS, ATHAN G. and COX, JOHN STUART 1988 *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press
- TILLY, CHARLES 1978 *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co
- VAUGHN, STEPHEN 1992 'Ronald Reagan and the struggle for black dignity in cinema', *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 77, no. 1, pp. 1–16
- WHITE, WALTER 1948 *A Man Named White: The Autobiography of Walter White*, New York: Viking Press
- WILLIAMS, DAVID 1981 'The Bureau of Investigation and its critics, 1919–1921', *Journal of American History*, vol. 68, no. X, pp. 561–79

**JOHN A. NOAKES** was Assistant Professor of Sociology at Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, PA, when this article was written

**CURRENT ADDRESS:** Department of Sociology, 548 McNeil Building, 3718 Locust Walk, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6299, USA.